

CLAIMS:

1. A method of delivering data content from a data content provider to a customer processing platform and controlling use of the data content at the customer processing platform, comprising:

      encrypting each of a plurality of sections of the data content using a respective one of a plurality of encryption keys to produce a corresponding plurality of encrypted sections;

10      delivering the plurality of encrypted sections to the customer processing platform; and

      delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys corresponding to the plurality of encryption keys, wherein the decryption keys are delivered in a manner such that the customer processing platform has simultaneous possession of at most a subset of the plurality of decryption keys at any time.

15      2. The method of claim 1, wherein delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys comprises:

      delivering to the customer processing platform a first key of the plurality of decryption keys for a first encrypted section of the plurality of encrypted sections;

20      25      delivering to the customer processing platform a second key of the plurality of decryption keys for a second encrypted section of the plurality of encrypted sections; and

causing the first key to be destroyed at the customer processing platform.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein delivering to the  
5 customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys comprises:

10 delivering to the customer processing platform a current key of the plurality of decryption keys for a current encrypted section of the plurality of encrypted sections to be processed at the customer processing platform;

15 delivering to the customer processing platform a next key of the plurality of decryption keys for a next encrypted section of the plurality of encrypted sections to be subsequently processed at the customer processing platform upon completion of processing of the current encrypted section; and

causing the current key to be destroyed at the customer processing platform.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein delivering to the  
20 customer processing platform a next key of the plurality of decryption keys and causing the current key to be destroyed at the customer processing platform are repeated for each of the plurality of encrypted sections to be subsequently processed.

25 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the current encrypted section is a first one of the plurality of encrypted sections, and wherein delivering to the customer processing platform a next key of the plurality of decryption keys and causing the

current key to be destroyed at the customer processing platform are repeated for each of the plurality of encrypted sections following the first encrypted section.

5 6. The method of claim 1, wherein delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys comprises:

providing key control software to the customer processing platform, the key control software being adapted to:

10 receive a decryption key for one of the plurality of encrypted sections;

complete decryption of the one section; and

destroy the decryption key.

15 7. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

billing a customer for delivery of the encrypted sections, and then billing the customer each time the data content is used at the customer processing platform.

20 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the data content is video content or music content, and wherein use of the data content at the customer processing platform comprises decryption and playback of the data content.

25 9. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of encryption keys comprises a respective symmetric

cryptographic key, and wherein each of the plurality of decryption keys comprises the symmetric cryptographic key of its corresponding encryption key.

5 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating each of the plurality of encryption keys using an identifier associated with the customer processing platform, to thereby generate a plurality of customer processing platform-specific keys.

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11. The method of claim 10, wherein generating comprises generating each of the plurality of customer processing platform-specific keys using the identifier and a respective key generation seed value.

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12. The method of claim 11, wherein delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys comprises delivering the respective key generation seed values.

20 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating a respective transmission value for each of the plurality of encryption keys using an identifier associated with the customer processing platform,

25 wherein delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys comprises delivering the transmission values.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

delivering the plurality of encrypted sections from the customer processing platform to a second customer

5 processing platform; and

delivering the plurality of decryption keys from the data content provider to the second customer processing platform, wherein the decryption keys are delivered in a manner such that the second customer processing platform has

10 simultaneous possession of at most a subset of the plurality of decryption keys at any time.

15. A computer-readable medium storing instructions

which, when executed by a processor at a data content provider,

15 perform a method according to claim 1.

16. A method of receiving and controlling playback of data content at a customer processing platform, comprising:

receiving over a communications medium a plurality of 20 encrypted sections of data content, each of which has been encrypted using a respective encryption key; and

for each encrypted section:

receiving a decryption key in respect of the encrypted section;

25 decrypting and playing back the encrypted section using the decryption key; and

destroying the decryption key after completing playback of the encrypted section.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising, for each  
5 encrypted section:

destroying decrypted data content at the customer processing platform after completing playback of the encrypted section.

10 18. The method of claim 16, wherein the communications medium is the public Internet.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein, for each encrypted section, the encryption key is the same as the decryption key.

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20. The method of claim 16, wherein receiving the plurality of encrypted sections of the data content comprises receiving the plurality of encrypted sections of the data content from another customer processing platform.

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21. A computer-readable medium storing instructions which, when executed by a customer processing platform, perform a method according to claim 16.

25 22. The method of claim 16, wherein each encryption key comprises a respective customer processing platform-specific

key which is determined based on an IP address of the customer processing platform.

23. The method of claim 16, wherein receiving each  
5 decryption key comprises receiving a transmission value that is determined based on the decryption key and a hardware identifier associated with the customer processing platform, further comprising, for each encrypted section:

recovering the decryption key from the transmission  
10 value.

24. A method of ordering data content for delivery over a communication network, comprising:

displaying product or service information associated  
15 with a service provider at a customer interface of an interactive device accessible to a customer;

registering the customer with the service provider;

transmitting customer verification information and  
order information requesting data content, input by the  
20 customer using the customer interface, to the service provider;

comparing the customer verification information with corresponding customer verification information accessible to the service provider; and

where the customer verification information matches  
25 the corresponding customer verification information accessible to the service provider:

segregating the requested data content into a plurality of sections;

encrypting each section of the data content with a respective encryption key;

5 delivering the encrypted data content to the interactive device; and  
billing an account of the customer.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein registering comprises  
10 receiving input of customer identification information on a network registration transmitting device and transmitting the customer identification information to the service provider.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the customer  
15 identification information comprises network address information.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein the customer  
verification information accessible to the service provider  
20 comprises the customer identification information.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein the customer  
verification information transmitted to the service provider  
comprises network address information and a customer  
25 identification number.

29. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

confirming delivery of the encrypted data content to the interactive device,

5 wherein billing of the account of the customer is responsive to confirming delivery of the encrypted data content.

30. The method of claim 24, wherein the segregating and encrypting were previously performed, wherein the encrypted 10 data content is stored at the service provider, and wherein the stored encrypted content is retrieved and delivered to the interactive device where the customer verification information matches the corresponding customer verification information accessible to the service provider.

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31. The method of claim 24, wherein the data content is received by the service provider from a data content provider.

32. The method of claim 24, wherein the encrypted data 20 content is obtained by the service provider from a data content provider and delivered to the interactive device where the customer verification information matches the corresponding customer verification information accessible to the service provider.

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33. The method of claim 24, wherein the interactive device is configured to distribute the encrypted data content to other interactive devices.

5 34. A method for controlling use of encrypted data content downloaded to a customer data content processing device, comprising:

receiving a request comprising customer verification information from a customer data content processing device;

10 comparing the customer verification information with corresponding stored customer information ; and

where the customer verification information is consistent with the stored customer verification information:

15 billing a usage charge to an account of the customer;

transmitting to the customer data content processing device a digital key to decrypt a current portion of the encrypted data content; and

20 for each subsequent portion of the encrypted data:

transmitting to the customer data content processing device a different key to decrypt the subsequent portion of the encrypted data; and

25 causing a key for a preceding portion of the encrypted data to be deleted

from the customer data content processing device.

35. A computer readable medium storing software code  
5 executable by a processing platform, the software code  
comprising:

first software code for coordinating downloading data  
content to a customer computer system from a data content  
service provider system or another customer computer system;  
10 and

second software code for establishing a connection  
with the data content service provider system to obtain  
permission to use the data content, and for using the data  
content where permission is obtained from the data content  
15 service provider system.

36. The computer readable medium of claim 35, wherein the  
second software code obtains further permissions from the data  
content service provider system to continue using the data  
20 content.

37. A signal embodied on a transmission medium containing  
software code executable by a processing platform, the software  
code comprising:

25 first software code for coordinating downloading data  
content to a customer computer system from a data content  
service provider system or another customer computer system;  
and

second software code for establishing a connection with the data content service provider system to obtain permission to use the data content, and for using the data content where permission is obtained from the data content service provider system.

38. A system for delivering data content from a data content provider to a customer processing platform and controlling use of the data content at the customer processing platform, comprising:

means for encrypting each of a plurality of sections of the data content using a respective one of a plurality of encryption keys to produce a corresponding plurality of encrypted sections;

15 means for delivering the plurality of encrypted sections to the customer processing platform; and

means for delivering to the customer processing platform a plurality of decryption keys corresponding to the plurality of encryption keys, wherein the decryption keys are 20 delivered in a manner such that the customer processing platform has simultaneous possession of at most a subset of the plurality of decryption keys at any time.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the customer processing platform comprises:

means for requesting the data content to be delivered to the customer processing platform;

means for receiving the plurality of encrypted sections;

means for receiving, for each encrypted section, the decryption key in respect of the encrypted section;

5 means for decrypting and playing back the encrypted section using the decryption key; and

means for destroying the decryption key, after completing playback of the encrypted section.

10 40. A data content distribution system comprising:

a data content server configured to receive download requests and permission requests for data content, to encrypt a plurality of sections of requested data content using respective encryption keys to thereby generate a plurality of 15 encrypted sections and to transmit the encrypted sections of the data content in response to a received download request for the data content, and to transmit each of a plurality of decryption keys respectively corresponding to the encryption keys in response to a permission request for the data content;

20 and

a data content download controller configured to generate download requests, to receive encrypted sections of data content in response to download requests, to generate permission requests when downloaded data content is to be used, 25 and for each encrypted section of data content to be used, to receive a corresponding one of the plurality of decryption keys, and to decrypt the encrypted section using the corresponding one of the plurality of decryption keys.

41. The system of claim 40, comprising a data network connecting the data content server and the data content download controller.

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42. The system of claim 41, further comprising a plurality of data content download controllers connected to the data network.

10 43. The system of claim 42, wherein each of the plurality of data content download controllers is implemented in conjunction with a respective customer computer system and is further configured to download encrypted sections of data content from other customer computer systems.